

Juanita Erickson
House Bill No. 2223
Monday, February 20, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairman (Adam) Thomas, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Juanita Erickson. I am the Superintendent of USD 461 Neodesha Schools, a 3A school district in Southeast Kansas with approximately 777 student's pre-k to grade 12 with 46.9 % of our students on free and reduced lunch, and a mean family income of \$71,117.

I support House Bill No. 2223 relating to the Kansas school equity and enhancement act; removing the sunset for the high-density at-risk student weighting; amending K.S.A. 2022 Supp. 72-5151 and repealing the existing section. For districts the size of Neodesha Schools, access to high-density at-risk funding is about \$920,000 for the 2022-2023 school year. This funding supports our students, so they have access to evidence-based practices.

As an educator, I went into the profession to make a difference in the lives of our students. My 3rd grade teacher, Mrs. Bengston, cared about me as a student, and worked with me on evidence-based practices as I was behind in math skills. She quickly helped me to learn and close the math gap I had as a student. Mrs. Bengston spent countless hours working with me in a small group to reteach the concepts that I was lacking. You see it wasn't that I couldn't learn the concepts, but that I needed hands on manipulatives, in small groups, to grasp the concept. She would create songs that we would sing together to help me learn my multiplication facts. She was truly an amazing educator. She kept me focused and on-task to learn. I wanted to learn because she made learning fun and exciting, not just for me, but for all students in her classroom. I wanted to be Mrs. Bengston when I grew up. To this day, she is the best teacher I ever had in school and the reason I became an educator. Keeping the high-density at-risk funding for school districts will help teachers to be able to provide evidence-based practices to students and work to get more students on grade level in math and reading, where they have a deficit. Practices such as small group learning, after school homework assistance, differentiated instruction, reduced class size, and small group interventions are just a few examples of these evidence-based practices.

I am urging you to vote for **House Bill No. 2223** as removing the sunset for high-density at-risk student weighting is important for our students so we can close the learning gap that some of our students currently have.

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today. We know that early intervention works best for students who are struggling or behind. Let's give Kansas students every advantage possible, just like Mrs. Bengston did for me.